

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

receiving an audio request, via an audio-transmission medium, from a user seeking service providers from a wide array of fields of service;

when the audio request includes a field of service desired by the user, providing the user with an audio list of one or more service providers stored in a service provider database which match the field of service desired by the user;

determining a selection from the user for a selected service provider stored within the service provider database; and

connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein providing the user with an audio list of service providers further comprises:

when the audio request includes a voice request for a field of service desired by the user, converting the voice request into a database query language format utilizing interactive voice recognition software;

when the audio request from the user includes a keypad entry response from the user, converting a signal generated by the user's keypad entry into a database query language format in order to enable selection of service providers matching the field of service desired by the user from the service provider database; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query of the field of service desired by the user in order to generate a list of one or more service providers matching the user's desired field of service.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database; and  
when the service provider is approved for inclusion in the service provider database, generating a record in the service provider database, the record including provider information contained in the request, wherein the provider information includes one or more of a service price, real-time service provider availability, specific expertise of the service provider, languages spoken by the service provider and a quality rating for the service provider.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
billing the user for the live conversation with the selected service provider; and  
compensating the selected service provider for the live conversation with the user.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:  
measuring a duration of the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider; and  
calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation and a time-based price charged by the selected service provider.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:  
calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee charged by the service provider.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the audio request from the user is one of a voice request and a keypad entry response and includes one or more of a category of service providers, a service provider price, service provider availability, service provider specific expertise, service provider language and a service provider minimum quality rating.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein prior to the receiving the audio request, the method further comprises:

receiving a request from a user for connection to a voice-portal service provider system via the audio transmission medium;

establishing a connection between the user and the voice-portal service provider system in order to provide the user with a live connection with a chosen service provider;

providing the user with an audio list of the wide array of fields of service available from the audio portal service provider system; and

providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each field of service within the audio list of fields of service, such that the user can enter a field of service code on a keypad of the user audio transmission medium to select a desired field of service.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein following the connecting the user with the selected service provider, the method further comprises:

once the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider is complete, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for services rendered by the service provider; and

recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein determining a selection from the user further comprises:

when the user audio request includes a voice request, converting the voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user;

when the user audio request includes a keypad entry response, converting a signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query language format in order to determine the service provider selected by the user; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the service provider desired by the user to enable connection between the user and the desired service provider.

11. A computer readable storage medium including program instruction that directs a computer to function in a specified manner when executed by a processor, the program instructions comprising:

receiving an audio request, via an audio-transmission medium, from a user seeking service providers from a wide array of fields of service;

when the audio request includes a field of service desired by the user, providing the user with an audio list of one or more service providers stored in a service provider database which match the field of service desired by the user;

determining a selection from the user for a selected service provider stored within the service provider database; and

connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.

12. The computer readable storage medium of claim 10, wherein providing the user with an audio list of service providers further comprises:

when the audio request includes a voice request for a field of service desired by the user, converting the voice request into a database query language format utilizing interactive voice recognition software;

when the audio request from the user includes a keypad entry response from the user, converting a signal generated by the user's keypad entry into a database query language format in order to enable selection of service providers matching the field of service desired by the user from the service provider database; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query the field of service desired by the user in order to generate a list of one or more service providers matching the user's desired field of service.

15. The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the instruction for billing the user further comprises:

- measuring the duration of the live conversation between the user and the provider;
- and
- calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation and a time-based price charge by the provider.

15. The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the instruction for billing the user further comprises:

- measuring the duration of the live conversation between the user and the provider;
- and
- calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation and a time-based price charge by the provider.

16. The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the instruction for billing the user further comprises:

calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee price charge by the provider.

16. The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the instruction for billing the user further comprises:

calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee price charge by the provider.

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18. The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein prior to the instruction for receiving the voice request, the apparatus further comprises instructions of:

receiving a request from a user for connection to a voice-portal service provider system via the audio transmission medium;

establishing a connection between the user and the voice-portal service provider system in order to provide the user with a live connection with a chosen service provider;

providing the user with an audio list of the wide array of fields of service available from the audio portal service provider system; and

providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each field of service within the audio list of fields of service, such that the user can enter a field of service code on a keypad of the user audio transmission medium to select a desired field of service.

19. The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein following the instruction for connecting the user with the selected service provider, the apparatus further comprises instructions of:

once the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider is complete, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for services rendered by the service provider; and

recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.

20. The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein determining a selection from the user further comprises:

when the user audio request includes a voice request, converting the voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user;

when the user audio request includes a keypad entry response, converting a DTMF signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query language format in order to determine the service provider selected by the user; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the service provider desired by the user to enable connection between the user and the desired service provider.

21. An audio portal service provider system comprises:  
an audio transmission medium to connect a user to the system;  
an audio recognition engine for receiving an audio request from the user for a service provider stored in a service provider database; and  
a processor to receive a selection from the user for a selected provider from the audio recognition engine, and connect the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.
22. The system of claim 21, further comprising:  
a system interface to provide the user with an audio list of available fields of service providers, accept a field of service desired by the user, provide the user with a list of one or more service providers stored in a service provider database which match the field of service desired by the user, and receive a selection from the user for a selected provider.
23. The system of claim 21, further comprising:  
a provider interface for receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database, and generate a record in the service provider database, the record including provider information contained in the request.
24. The system of claim 23, wherein the provider information includes one or more of a service price, real-time service provider availability, specific expertise of the service provider, languages spoken by the service provider and a quality rating for the service provider.
25. The system of claim 21, wherein audio transmission medium further comprises:  
a public switched telephone network interface to connect a user to the system.
26. The system of claim 21, wherein audio transmission medium further comprises:  
a wireless communications network interface to connect a user to the system.